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Microcosm
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Have you ever wanted something for years and when you got it, you weren't sure you could handle it? This is my third year on Microcosm's staff. I always aspired to be editor. I always wanted to say, "I don't care if you don't like it... I'm the editor! I say it goes in!" To say, "There's no way we are publishing this!" To say, "Get me some coffee, stat!" With that authority comes responsibility. Microcosm has endured for almost thirty years. I couldn't let it go under during my stay at the helm. I couldn't say, "I don't know what I'm doing," only, "This is my first time being editor."

We prayed a lot this year. We prayed entries would come in on time. We prayed we would make deadlines. We prayed for inspiration. In 2 Timothy 3:16, it says Scripture is God-breathed. That's what inspiration means, to ask God to come so close, you can feel him breathe on you. I can safely say I have felt his presence with us.

We've learned a lot this year. We learned poetry isn't always poetic and short stories aren't always short. We've also read some pieces that made us cry, made us laugh, or made chills go down our backs. Those pieces are the ones we have collected; in hopes they do the same for others.

Executive Editor
Katherine Davis
Katherine Davis

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on writing

Burlian O'Neal Walker

Burlian O'Neal Walker

Burlian O'Neal Walker, a native of Magee, is a graduate of Copiah-Lincoln Community College. Upon graduation from Co-Lin, he received his B. S. degree in journalism from the University of Southern Mississippi. A Newspaper Fund Fellow at the University of Mississippi, he has done post-graduate work at USM.

After serving as a reporter for the *Magee Courier* and an English teacher in the Simpson County Schools, Mr. Walker returned to Copiah-Lincoln in 1967 where he served the college in a number of positions. He began his career at Co-Lin as an instructor of journalism, communications, and English. He was also the Director of Public Information. In 1979, he became the Director of Alumni Affairs. In 1980, he began serving as Director of Development. In 1988, he became the Executive Director of the Foundation and held that position until June 30, 1997. At the time of his retirement, he was serving the college as Director of Public Relations, Alumni Affairs, and an instructor of communications. Mr. Walker was the sponsor of the yearbook *Trillium* for twenty-eight years and campus newspaper *The Wolf Tales* for twenty-two years. Under his sponsorship, both won numerous awards from the Mississippi Scholastic Press Association and the Mississippi Junior College Press Association as well as many regional honors.

As Director of Public Information, Mr. Walker wrote many news releases and features for newspapers, radio, and television. In addition, he designed a myriad of brochures, pamphlets, booklets, magazines, newsletters, and other publications. He won numerous writing awards from the College Public Relations Association of Mississippi. His award-winning feature article on the city of Wesson appeared in the February 1974 edition of *Roadways* magazine. His feature article on Hurricane Camille was picked up by the wire service in 1969 and ran nationwide. He was the playwright for *Magee: Millennium Centennial Celebration,* a two-hour play produced in Magee in March 2000. He also wrote a children's radio play *The Picnic and the*

Old Man.

Mr. Walker served as advisor to the campus radio station, WCLL-FM, at its inception and was the host of a weekly news program that aired locally on four radio stations. In addition, he served as the host for the 36-hour St. Jude radiothon on WJMB for four years.

A charter member of the Mississippi Broadcast Education Association in 1982, he was elected its secretary in 1983. He has served as state adviser to the Mississippi Junior College Press Association, President of the Copiah-Lincoln Alumni Association, President of the College Public Relations Association of Mississippi, President of the Mississippi Association for Journalism Education, and Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Brookhaven Little Theatre. In addition, he was secretary of the Mississippi Community College Inter-Alumni Association and was the secretary/treasurer of the National Society of Fund Raising Executives. He holds membership in the University of Southern Mississippi Alumni Association and Copiah-Lincoln Alumni Association. He also holds membership in the National Society of Published Poets.

Mr. Walker was chosen for inclusion in *Men of Achievement*, a publication by the International Biographical Center in Cambridge, England. He was also selected to Marquis' *Who's Who in America* sectional volumes; American Biographical Center's *Personalities of the South*; and Outstanding Young Men of America. In 1976, Mr. Walker received the *Trillium* dedication. The Alumni Association chose him Copiah-Lincoln's Outstanding Instructor of the Year in 1984. In 1999, Mr. Walker was selected Copiah-Lincoln's Alumnus of the Year. In that same year, he received the Ann Bradberry Award. In March 2001 he received the National Community Service Award from AARP.

Mr. Walker currently resides in Hattiesburg where he is active in many organizations. He served as chair of the TRIAD Council for Forrest County, a community-wide board consisting of the sheriff, chiefs of police, fire chiefs, and AARP, in 2000-2001. He is currently serving as vice-chair. He is also on the Advisory Board of the American Cancer Society for Forrest, Perry, and Lamar Counties. He is a Relay for Life Participant and will be a representative from Mississippi as an Ambassador on the Hill in Washington, D.C. in September 2002 for the National Relay for Life.

He is the District 5 Director of the Mississippi Retired Teachers Association and a member of the Pine Belt Area Retired Teachers Association and the National Retired Teachers Association. He is currently serving on the Board of Directors for AARP. He served on the Board of Directors for the Pine Belt Chapter of the Public Relations Association of Missis-

sippi as scholarship chair in 2001 and awards chair in 2002. In addition, he is on the Advisory Board of the Hattiesburg Senior Citizens Center.

He is an active member of Cansurmount for Cancer Survivors and is the publicity chair of Cameraderie Photo Club. He is also a member of Friends of the Library, University of Southern Mississippi's Institute for Learning in Retirement, and a volunteer with the Forrest County Cancer Center.

Wish Fulfillment

Derek Barham
1st Place Short Story
Lawrence County High School

"I wish I could be like that," Damon whispered as he leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees. He secretly watched as the "Crombies" spent yet another day practicing their daily regimen. Their robotic routine had been the same since they were all little, before they evolved into the snobby brats they now were. The "Crombies," referring to Abercrombie and Fitch, a must in this unrealistic lifestyle, had assembled in this exact spot every summer as far back as Damon could remember. On every steamy south California day, the "Crombies" could be seen practicing backstrokes for the swim team or oiling up for a day of basking in the sun.

Of course, there were a few loopholes in this silver concrete constitution. "An outcast of the elite" Damon silently called himself. It was sort of funny when he thought about it. Elite usually referred to a select few, yet in Damon's situation, the elite was the majority. All it took to be in this group was a nice wad of pocket change and a prestigious line of family names. These simple requirements were the ticket to a world of fast cars, fast women, and fast-talking. It was a chance to have everything handed to you on a platter without ever having to put forth a hint of effort. Damon, however, unable to meet the standards, was left sitting in the heat surveying his wealthier comrades instead of joining them in the refreshing oasis.

Damon altered his position, turned over, and searched for something worthy of his attention. Finally, he spotted a particular point of interest... Valerie Plymoth, the poster girl for the "Crombie" clique. Her strawberry hair reflected the sun's rays in such a way that one could mistake the blinding glow for the path to heaven. Her almond eyes could pierce your soul like a dagger, revealing all of your deepest secrets. Her body... realizing that his fixation was beginning to take an obsessive turn, Damon chuckled and shook his head. He ran his arm across his damp forehead and brought himself up on all fours, preparing to leave. Just before he got up, he took one more look down at the poolside, hoping for one more glimpse of Valerie. As could be expected, though, a good thing does not last forever. There was Mr. Perfect himself, Todd Breckman, getting ready to

put suntan lotion all over Valerie's back. Damon looked on helplessly as Todd placed his hand on Valerie's tender shoulder and began to rub in the oil.

Oh, how Damon would love to rub Valerie's back (not to mention the rest of her body). Damon snorted angrily. How could Valerie even want to be around Todd? As much as Damon hated to admit it, he knew why. He knew exactly why every girl that even looked at Todd was completely obsessed with him and why every guy that had the misfortune of being around him was forever drowning in a pool of jealousy. It was because Todd was perfect in every way. He had a perfect life, complete with perfect house, perfect car, perfect body, and even perfect hair. Damon was infatuated by the flawlessness of Todd's coif. Todd had a head full of sun-kissed locks that flowed gently over his forehead and found a resting place behind his ear. It was truly perfect. Damon could not even begin to fathom how many mornings he had spent trying to achieve a "Todd Breckman."

Damon grunted and buried his face in his hands, irritated at thoughts of Todd. He could feel all the forgotten summers creeping up his back, sending chills down his spine. Memories of Todd Breckman's insults and pranks flooded Damon's mind. The list of humiliations and mockeries at the hands of Todd was endless. Damon lifted himself off the ground and began his trek home. Just before the pool was out of sight, he turned back for one more glimpse, one more look at the den of perfection. His searching eyes were met by those of Todd Breckman, who had just finished the honorable task of helping Valerie with her tan. Todd shot a look that made Damon's skin crawl. It was that cocky, arrogant look that said, "Don't worry about it, Damon. I've got this girl covered." It took every ounce of control in Damon's body, but he refrained from going down the hill. He squeezed his fists and gritted his teeth as hard as he could as he turned away and started the trek home. "One day," he said. "One day things will be different!"

That night Damon sat on his bed, thinking of all the things Todd had done to him. As hard as he tried to think of something else, the anger just kept building up in his head. He grabbed the arrowhead Grandpa had sent him a week ago and twisted it in his hand. He found this was helpful when he was trying to think. "I hate that jerk!" he said angrily. "I wish something bad would happen to Todd Breckman! Something really bad!" He squeezed the arrowhead violently as he repeated his wish. All of Damon's built-up anger surged through his body, finding release through his words. He softly screamed his wish over and over again. "I wish something really bad would happen to Todd Breckman!" He lay there, finding comfort in his wish, until

he finally grew tired and closed his eyes. Eventually, he drifted off to sleep, but the hateful thoughts for Todd that filled him lasted deep into the night. His dreams were filled with visions of the overconfident snob. Maybe he would wake up to find a pimple-covered face, or he would go outside to see that his precious Trans-Am had a huge scratch on it. If only Damon had known the effect his wish would have. The future tampered with, destiny was altered, and fate was changed. Damon would soon find out that what fate had in store for Todd Breckman was not pimples or a scratch. It was much, much worse.

The screeching wail of sirens woke Damon the next morning. It was so loud that Damon jumped. He crawled out of bed and lifted the blinds. He got there just in time to see the ambulance turn swiftly around the corner. Quickly, he grabbed a pair of shorts. Slipped on his tennis shoes, and headed off in the direction of all the noise. It was not long before the sirens stopped, so Damon knew he was close. He kept running until he found himself at the same spot he had been yesterday. It was not the same, though. When he peered down the hill at the pool today, he did not hear music or see people swimming. Instead, he saw a circle of people standing around something. He could not see what it was though. Then he saw the paramedics pull the stretcher out and motion for the onlookers to give them room. It was not until then that Damon could see what was causing all of the commotion. Todd Breckman was lying on the ground... and he was not moving.

"No way," Damon sobbed. "There's no way I had anything to do with this!" He drilled his arrowhead into the top of his knee as he tried to come up with a logical explanation. "There's just no way!" He fell onto his pillow and laid his arm across his face. Without even seeing her, he could feel Ma come in and stand at the door.

"Honey," she said. "Honey, are you okay? I mean, we can..."

"Ma, go away! Please! I just wanna be alone, okay?"

"Look, honey. You need to..."

"I wish you would just go away!" Damon screamed. "Just leave! Okay? Just go away!" She frowned but left the room. Damon rolled over onto his stomach and closed his eyes. He remained frozen in that position for what seemed like hours, but only turned out to be a few minutes. His mind was cluttered by thoughts of Todd. Oh, how Damon regretted what he said! How could he have done such a thing? "I wish I could just disappear," Damon said softly, but his words echoed through the house. His mind shifted to Ma. He had been so rude to her when all she was trying to do was help him. Finally, Damon made the decision to get out of bed and

go apologize to Ma. He wiped his eyes and looked over at the clock to find that it was ten minutes until six. The fragment of sky visible through his window showed that it was starting to get dark.

He climbed out of bed and shoved his arrowhead into his pocket. He slowly made his way down the hall, rehearsing his apology as he walked. He turned and entered the living room, expecting to find his mom watching television. The TV was on; however, Ma was nowhere to be found. "Ma!" he yelled. "Ma, where are you?" No response was heard. He searched the entire house, which was not hard considering they lived in a two-bedroom house, but he still could not find her. "Where could she be?" Damon wondered. It had not been that long since he had yelled at her. He went outside to see if she had gone somewhere, but her old, beat-up car was still parked out front. "She must have gone walking," Damon reasoned. "I must have made her pretty mad." Finally, Damon gave up his search and went into the kitchen. He poured himself a glass of milk and sat down at the table. Having nothing better to do, he picked up the mail and flipped through it. Surprisingly, there was a letter addressed to him. He turned over the envelope and ripped open its back, revealing a letter and a small, tan piece of paper. He pulled out the letter first. Damon grinned when he found out it was from Grandpa. He read:

> Hi Sonny Boy,
>
> I'm sorry I can't come by for your birthday. I ended up having to come down here on a business trip. My company just got a new piece of land. I'm sure you already knew that, though. Anyways, I picked you up something yesterday while I was out surveying land. I hope you like the arrowhead. I know you like that kind of stuff, so I figured the arrowhead would be a perfect gift. I got if from an Indian chief. He called it a "wishing rock." He said it was the real thing. Yeah, I'm sure! Anyways, he gave me this little paper with it, but I forgot to send it earlier. I'm sorry. I don't think it's that important, though. It's kinda creepy if you ask me! I guess it's kinda "cool," though. Isn't that the word you kids use? Well, I love ya! See you in a few weeks.
>
> Love,
>
> Grandpa

Damon pulled the arrowhead out of his pocket as he laughed at Grandpa's letter. He held it in his hand. "Wishing rock? Yeah, I bet!" He opened the tan piece of paper and read aloud:

This tiny stone can bring things great
But can also be used for deeds of hate
Be careful, user, it should be warned
This rock can bring much unwanted harm
Be careful, user, watch what you say
First wish, fulfilled, the very next day
The second should happen quite quickly, you'll see
The third, fulfilled, when this poem you read
So be careful, user, mean exactly what you say
Each wish must be fulfilled perhaps not the right way
So be careful, user, have a guided eye
If you are not careful, you just might...

As the sun fell behind the horizon and the shadows came out to play, all that was heard through the house was silence. The only thing that could prove life had even existed there was an empty glass of milk and an old dirty arrowhead, just waiting for someone else to pick it up.

The Masterpiece

Jason Shannon
2nd Place Short Story
Wesson High School

Slamming his brush down on the palette splattering paint all over his work, Johnny Black was so disgusted with the model he bellowed, " Will you get dressed and get out of here!" He stomped out of the studio and went down into his study screaming, "This is so frustrating, it is making me disgusted. There is never a model that doesn't have something wrong with her. Oh, God, what I'd give for just one flawless creature and by all that is holy, I swear I could create a masterpiece." With this angry outcry, he dropped down on the couch, took a shot from a bottle of wine, lay down, and buried his head in the pillow. The model, frightened and upset ran from the studio to escape from his temperamental tantrum. Johnny, normally a humble and quiet man, was apparently feeling the anxiety of just turning forty. This might be the reason for this unusual outburst, and not being able to master his craft before, as he put it, "Hitting the mid-life crises."

Completely frustrated he closed his eyes and fell asleep. He slept half the night, awakened suddenly, half dazed, sat up on the couch, and blurted out, "Why not conceive my own creature? I'll show them I still have what it takes. Yes, of course, I'll create the perfect specimen. By God, I can do it. I'll make it life size, and call it, "My Masterpiece." He quickly cleaned of the easel, hung a new canvas, and began to sketch. Enthusiasm ignited his spirit as he toiled with this new exciting idea. He worked endlessly night and day forsaking everything, including food and sleep. He shut himself off from the outside world and this burning passion kept him alive as he labored for weeks on his new endeavor. At last it was finished. He was overwhelmed by the beauty he had mastered and knew that his objective had been accomplished. He had created the most beautiful creature in all imagination and was proud for it was truly- "A Masterpiece."

After hanging his new portrait up over the fireplace mantle, he spent most of his waking hours in admiration of the breathtaking beauty of his creation. This heavenly creature just seemed to become alive before his very eyes and it was so captivating, he was cast under is mystical spell. He became obsessed with her fascinating presence. One night during a heavy rainstorm, he was awakened by what he though was a voice crying out for help. Going down to investigate, he found a window had blown open and

the portrait had fallen from the wall. He closed the window and lifted the painting up, leaning it against the fireplace mantle. As he left the room, he thought he heard a voice mention his name. H e turned and there she stood, out of the picture frame in all her beauty with outstretched arms beckoning him to come to her. He hesitatingly moved towards her and then melted into her embrace. In all his life, he had never had a feeling that took over his entire being. He was so enraptured by her beauty and her soft warm touch he fell into a deep uncontrollable delight, slowly drifting off into bliss.

The next morning when he awakened, strangely enough, he was back in his own bed. Concerned about the preceding night's events, he rushed down to the sitting room, and there she was, back in the painting and just as beautiful as ever. He got the gardener to help him, and they re-hung the picture back above the fireplace mantel. Through all of this he was aware of her presence and could not get the lovely creature out of his head. Nearly every night he wold experience the same mysterious adventure, in fact he awaited the wonderful encounters. Their intimate relationship became stronger and more aggressive, to the point that he felt he could not exist without it.

As time passed by, she began making incessant demands. She wanted the housekeeper dismissed because she had glared at her and called her, "Satan's Prideful Advocate." He let housekeeper go. Then she wanted the gardener fired because he kept peering in through the window at her and the dog's barking upset her. He obliged her every want, even got rid of the gardener and the dog. Soon after that, the garden and the house became almost unlivable and the rodents raided the house, but still he lived just to be with her those few precious moments in the middle of the night. He even lavished her with gifts and stole for her, and act that was against his nature. But, her dominance over him was too strong to resist, as he became a thief and a conniver. More and more he ceaseless desires became intense. Finally, after many weeks of this torment she demanded the ultimate of outrage- a murder! She told him there was an evil person she hated and wanted tracked down and destroyed. He tried to defy her but she threatened to leave. His resistance was so helplessly feeble he finally agreed to do this dreadful thing.

With great reluctance, he got a lead on the victim. It was a woman, and he followed her to a remote area, a cliff high above the ocean beach. He approached her with the thought of pushing her off the edge down to her death. He slowly crept upon her and as he came closer, he was horrified when he realized that the figure was the beautiful woman of his portrait.

Stricken by the surprise, he became furious and then violent. The torment was so overpowering he struck her and then embraced her, but when he tried to kiss her, she resisted. As they struggled, they both went over the cliff down to their doom into the sea below. They were washed out into the surf, and the turbulent waves greeted them, anxiously swallowing them up. A few moments later, a mysterious figure appeared walking out of the brush and vanished into the mist. Was it the beautiful woman of his portrait? The waves washed Johnny's body up on the beach and a local fisherman retrieved it.

After a lavish funeral for the painter, the mansion was opened to the public for viewing. Curiously hanging over the huge fireplace mantle was a strange and confusing painting, entitled, "THE MASTERPIECE," but what was missing from the canvas was any sign of the figure of the so called beautiful and mysterious woman.

Illustrator: Anna Gatlin

Popcorn and Jesus

Sarah Causey
3rd Place Short Story
Wesson High School

"So, where have you been all my life?" I wanted to gag. But I smiled instead. "Waiting for a man like you," I said, smiling into his face. "Yeah, some man," I thought. His "goatee" was little more than peach-fuzz and his voice was higher than mine. His breath smelled like cigarettes and Doritos. I forced myself to smile, but I felt like hurling. He draped his arm around my shoulders, and the "Sweat stinks; Arrid works" jingle raced through my mind.

"You wanna catch a bite to eat?" He asked as I concentrated on not breathing through my nose.

I wasn't hungry, but I lied and said, "Sure, I'm starving." So I hopped in his car. It wasn't a bad car; at least, the car itself wasn't too bad. But a stale pineapple air freshener was hanging from the rearview mirror and the seats smelled like smoke and mildew. He turned the radio up and serenaded me with Jimmy Buffet the entire way to Burger King.

As we pulled into the parking lot, he said, "Hey Kasey, reach down there by your feet and grab my wallet." I didn't bother to tell him my name was Kelly and felt around on the floorboard for his wallet. I found a few small, square plastic packages and cringed. This guy was disgusting. "Find it?" he asked as we pulled up to the speaker. He didn't even wait for my answer; he ordered our food and drove up to the window.

"Um, I can't find your wallet anywhere," I said, obviously annoyed.

"Oh, well, hmmmph. I must have left it at home. You got a little bit of cash on you?" I rolled my eyes and grabbed my purse, while I tried not to think about what was probably going to happen later that night.

Little did I know it could get worse. And it did. He drove out to the park and turned the car off. He looked at me and smiled. In the light of the streetlamp, I could see a piece of hamburger bun wedged between his front teeth. I cringed. "Hey baby, what's wrong? Why don't you let the love doctor make you feel better?" He leaned over toward me.

"Nothing's wrong," I said as I faked a smile and tried to convince myself that he wasn't as disgusting as he seemed. After all, I had been with worse. I closed my eyes and spent the rest of the night pretending he was somebody else, somebody special and gorgeous, and somebody that loved me.

After that night, I tried to forget all about the self-proclaimed love doctor. And it was easy to, considering what happened that Monday. As I sat in my first period class, writing "Kelly loves ???" all over my notebook, HE came and sat right next to me. Aslyn Marshall, THE Aslyn Marshall, sat about eleven inches from me. He tapped my shoulder and said, "Hi, I'm Aslyn." As if I didn't already know that. "And you're Kelly, right?" After all the years of standing in front of the mirror and planning my behavior in a situation like this, I flopped. I actually did that little cheesy head cock thing that I make fun of Marcie Phillips for doing. And I *giggled.*

"Yeah, I'm Kelly. Nice to meet you." Nice to meet you?? You aren't meeting him, you idiot. You already know him. He's only been in your homeroom for the past three years, I thought as I tried not to stare at him. He smiled his gorgeous smile and looked right at me and made my toes tingle.

He said, "Yeah, it's nice to meet you, too." Then we had one of those moments. Moments you write about in your diary and tell your friends about. I couldn't wait to tell Stephanie, "Yeah, and then he just stopped, and he looked at me. I swear, if Mrs. Weathers hadn't have called his name and asked him to "please get out his book and pay attention" he would have asked me out right then and there.

But before I got the chance to brag about my little rendezvous, something even better happened. As I was trying to cram my Trig book in my locker, I heard someone call my name. Looking up, I realized it was Aslyn. I dropped my book. He smiled and picked it up for me. I was frozen and just stood there, looking at him. "Um, what are you doing Friday?" He kept scratching his cheek and was kind of stuttering. Almost as if he were nervous or something. He continued, "My church is going ice-skating, and I figured maybe, if you weren't busy, then, um, you might like to go with us." I beamed. Aslyn Marshall was asking me to go ice-skating.

"Yeah," I almost yelled.

"Well, great. I'll pick you up at eight then, okay?" I nodded, he smiled, and it was all over. I was left standing at my locker trying to convince myself that Aslyn really had just asked me out. After I breathed into my hand to check my breath, I looked around to see who had witnessed the wonderful occurrence at my locker. Then I grinned and practically ran all the way to the parking lot.

Friday night, I was in the garage waiting for Aslyn at seven thirty. At about seven fifty-nine, he finally pulled in the driveway. He actually got out and asked if he could meet my parents. Stunned, I told him they weren't home. He smiled and said he'd meet them next time, then. "What does *that*

mean?" I wondered, daring to entertain the hope of another date.

The whole night was wonderful. But not as I'd hoped it would be. Aslyn didn't even try to hold my hand. Yet, somehow, everything was perfect. He was so sweet to me, and he paid for everything. And when I fell down when I was skating, he actually pretended to fall too so I wouldn't feel stupid. When he dropped me off at my house, he came inside to meet my parents. I had hoped they wouldn't be home yet, but they were, and surprisingly, they weren't very embarrassing. So, all in all, things were strange, but perfect.

That Monday in class, Aslyn sat by me again. He asked me if he could borrow my notes on the Declaration of Independence, but I'm pretty sure that was just an excuse, because I had just seen his in his notebook. The whole class period, I couldn't focus on anything the teacher said. I kept crossing and uncrossing my legs, biting my lip, and staring at Aslyn out of the corner of my eye. When the bell rang, he asked if he could come over to study with me for our test on Friday. I practically fell over. We agreed on a time, and I spent all afternoon cleaning the house. I expected a lot to happen that night, but I had no idea what was beginning.

That night at my house, while we were eating popcorn and trying to study, Aslyn started talking to me about Jesus. And I got angry at first, because I assumed he was only hanging out with me to convert me. I knew he went to church and I knew he had never been with a girl before because I had heard some guys picking on him about it. And I didn't want to be looked down upon as a "sinner." Then, I realized that he wasn't just trying to convert me. He was sincere. He was really passionate about his God. His face lit up and made him even more gorgeous when he talked about Jesus and I couldn't help but want some of what he had. So, when he asked me if I wanted to know Jesus, I jumped at my chance. We prayed together and after we finished, I felt so different. I felt pure. And beautiful. For the first time in my life, I felt beautiful.

Aslyn and I became best friends after that night. He taught me a lot about Jesus and I told him about how I used to be. He explained to me that God forgives us for what we've done and makes us new. He introduced me to some of the kids at church, and I found out that Christians are not as boring as I thought they were. I also started going to a True Love Waits class, and I learned how important it is to stay pure for my future husband. Speaking of my future husband, Aslyn told me yesterday that he knows that I am the woman God created for him. He grabbed my hand, stared into my eyes just like he did that first time, and said, "I love you Kelly."

Signs

Elizabeth Davis
Honorable Mention Short Story
Wesson High School

Do you take walks? I mean, do you ever get up in the morning and just want to walk? Yes, I know there are cars, but don't you ever want to experience the world a bit more up close? I'm a walker. I'm one of those people you see wearing sweats as they trudge through the rain. I'm one of those nuts you see in short, short biking shorts in the middle of December. Well, I might be crazy, but one day I saw something the average person will never experience. The drivers in the world never really stop and look around. Its always STOP here, GO now, TURN left. They have no idea the conflicts that happen right outside their driver's side window.

"Oh, why must I be on this dreadful sign all day?" the little letter O announced. "Why can't we ever be positive? All day its stop and go, stop and go. No one ever even looks at us. Their mind is on the road, and only on the road." O sighed softly and stretched herself a bit. The other letters were busy with their own things and had not heard a word she said. No matter, they never listened to her anymore. "Have you noticed," she began, "that..."

"You never shut up!" S interrupted. She stood straight as she stared over her gorgeous curves. S was the type of letter that never ceased to amaze. People were always using her to say smooth, sensual things. She stared at O, that little round figure, and wondered how much bigger that letter could get. "Sheeesh, O. You just talk all day, don't you? Some of us should try to stay silent. I must get my beauty sleep."

O watched S settle on the far side of the sign. "My, she's sassy today," she whispered. "Now, as I was saying. Have any of you ever noticed how everyone that stops here looks so mad? No one ever stops with a smile on their face. They're always so..."

"Touchy?" T replied, turning to the O.

"Yes," O smiled. "They always look so worried, so stressed."

"They're tired of having to stop at every little sign. Really, they shouldn't make so many signs. I could have been in theatre." T sighed. "I could have been on a marquee spelling out The Way We Were, or Tremors. It could have been terrific." T turned away tearfully and made his way to S's side.

"Why," O cried, "Why are there so many signs? I mean, everyday, it's the same thing. Cars stop, then go. Couldn't they have signs that say SLOW, or GO NOW?"

"That's preposterous," P proclaimed. "The government placed this post here. The Department of Passenger Safety made sure that stop signs were put in particular positions along perilous passageways."

O looked to her side other side. Pompous P was ranting again. She could swear he talked more than she did.

"Why, even the President would be proud of the number of signs on the roads today." He continued.

O stretched herself a bit more. They always said she had a big mouth, now she was going to really use it.

"I think I should find myself a new home. I don't belong among all this ostentatious living. I mean, T, you should really be in theatre. Its your dream to spell out something more important that this sign."

T looked up at her. "You're right. You really are. I mean, why be stuck on one street sign when I could be in Hollywood?" T stood and turned towards the other letters. I'll be seeing you around. Ta ta!" He jumped from the sign without a second thought.

S stared from her spot. "Did he just... leave? I didn't believe anyone could ever leave the sign." She smiled. "If he can do it, I know I can. I really can't handle your chatter much longer, O. I should find some store selling sexy lingerie. Maybe they could use me on their window." She sighed happily as she too skipped off the sign.

"Well. Its just you and me now, P." O replied. "I'm sure we could get along. Don't you think..."

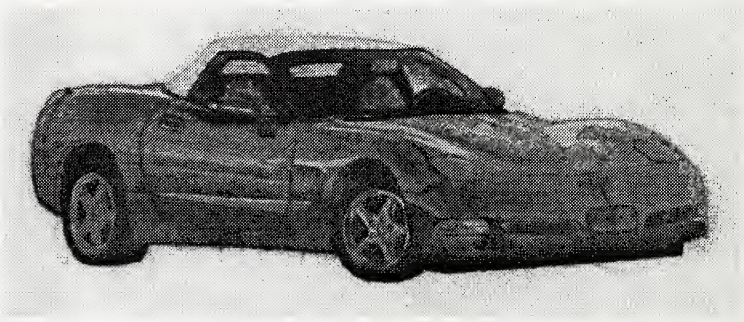
"I should leave too. Politics would never stand for this. Letters leaving their posts to chase dreams... the nerve of them! The government will be coming soon to correct this sign. That or some teenagers will be plastering petty profanities on us any moment now. I'm going to my congressman. He'll have to deal with one very unhappy P." With that, P gathered his legal papers and left post-haste.

O looked around herself. She knew she wouldn't have this empty sign for long. "You know," she said. "That yield sign on Jefferson Street had similar problems. I heard about that renegade L that was looking for something a little bit more lenient. Maybe, just maybe, I can make something of this. I'm sure my friend V, from the Veer Left sign, could help. I know there has to be letters out there that want to be different. Maybe the government won't have to take this sign down." That moment, O decided inside herself that she would make her own statement. One that would

make the people that stopped smile, make them be happy to look at the sign.

This is what I was telling you about. One day while out on my walk, I heard a different sound coming from downtown, peaceful silence. As I walked down Main Street, people smiled. There was no road rage, no obscenities yelled from car windows. I wondered what could make a town so happy, what could wipe away the stress of a busy day. Children smiled and pointed, parents waved at fellow drivers. There on the sign that was always so strict, something beautiful had flowered. Instead of STOP, another word was spelled. LOVE was written there in all its glory.

You probably think I'm crazy for telling you this. You're telling yourself that the weird walker must have taken a sniff from some flower before seeing that sign. I tell you the truth; nothing obstructed my vision or impaired my thoughts. The whole town saw that sign, and we all stopped for a moment, not out of habit, but out of wonder. We all saw a little beauty in the busy streets. Drivers noticed the flowers growing along the interstate and the songs birds sang instead of those on the radio. Our drivers and our town aren't the same, really. I guess it only takes a little love to make the roads a better place.



Illustrator: Matt Goss

What Really Happened at Band Camp

Katie Davis
Short story
Copiah-Lincoln Community College

Mr. Sykes stood atop the platform, his hands waving in frenzied three quarter time. In his mind, the marching band was in perfect tune. The group before him fell somewhat short.

"Stop!" he shouted. "Trumpets, you've played that note sharp every time we play this. It's wrong. I don't care if you have to play it 18,576 times, you will get that note right!" He pauses for air and pushes his long hair away from his face. "And percussion, if you're not too loud, then you're too fast. This is the 'stand still' tune. We need a steady beat." He clapped his hands at each syllable. The band started again from the beginning.

I was in the back, holding cymbals for the snare drummers. I've done this since eighth grade and each year has been the same. It's the first day of band camp and no one practiced over the summer. The trumpets are too loud; the snare drums are too fast. This year has been different. It's college, I expected it to be different, to be a greater challenge. I didn't expect a band director hell bent on world domination.

Finally, it's time to leave. Mr. Sykes gives us our dismissal, "Be here, in the band hall at eight AM. We'll start learning the opener. Good job. Go away."

* * * * *

"Shouldn't we be doing fundamentals?" I asked someone next to me. "Most of us haven't marched since last year's Christmas parade."

"Yeah, that's a normal band director would do," he said. "This is Psycho Sykes."

"Psycho Sykes?"

"Yeah, word has it that he killed a guy last year for playing in the wrong key."

I couldn't believe it. Who would threaten; much less kill a person for playing a wrong note? This was all sophomore talk, to scare the freshman. Right?

Mr. Sykes stepped into the band hall immaculately dressed in head to toe black. "Drum major, pass out the music in the folder labeled 'opener'. I want this music memorized by tomorrow afternoon. You're in college now." By this time, the music had been distributed. Most marching band music is roughly half a piece of paper, sometimes two. Our 'opener' was

fifteen full sheets of music.

"You members of percussion are probably wondering if you can cut some of this, since your parts are mostly repetition. In this piece of music, there is no repetition. Each rhythm is unique. That goes for the rest of the band also. Not a single repeated phrase in this entire piece of music. Start warming up."

So it began. We went through the music one phrase at a time. I realized now why we weren't outside. The temperature was ninety-five degrees, and steadily getting higher. We would have to stop every few minutes for water breaks, which would interrupt the "learning experience". Finally we made it to the last phrase.

Mr. Sykes said, "Now I want to go to the beginning and play it straight through. When we're through, you can go to lunch." We began to play the piece. I heard a couple of notes that might have been wrong, but Mr. Sykes didn't notice. Maybe they were supposed to be like that.

We played on and on for hours. After an eternity, we reached the last measure. But to my horror, something had changed. At the end of every piece of music there's a double bar. This one had a double bar all right, but with two vertical dots placed before. It was a repeat sign. Mr. Sykes started singing.

"Welcome, welcome friend to the band show that never ends. We're so glad you could attend come and hear, come and hear!"

I knew then we would never leave.

Death

Jeremy Dingman
1st Place Poetry
Lawrence County High School

Complication, it floods my soul,
While these thoughts take control.
Should it be through truth and love,
Or through a source fitting like a glove?
Come to me oh sweet, sweet relief,
And rid my soul of a shadow, grief.
When I awaken from my sensuous sleep,
I'll yearn for a breath in which I'll not weep.
Oh come to me oh sweet, sweet relief,
One that will surly agree with belief.
What shall befall me as life reaches a head,
And when I reach my dash what will be said.
Will anyone ever wish to read my dreadful book,
Or simply pass the pages over without even a look?
I wish not to be forgotten, to never be known,
But for the one to feel the warmth from the light I've shown.
Oh do come to me oh sweet, sweet relief!

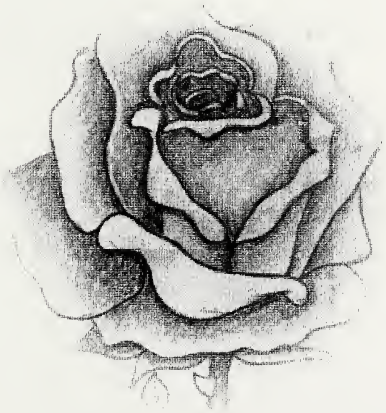
"Trip"

Josh Turnage
2nd Place Poetry
Wesson High School

I need to open your soul to see what I find,
Embark on a journey to the depths of your mind.
Fly into your head and seize every thought,
Take from you everything that can't be bought.
Turn your inside out,
Look inside to see what you're all about.
So maybe I can truly see,
If you are what you appear to be.

Chris Williams
3rd Place Poetry
Wesson High School

What is love?
Love is great.
Should I love?
Or should I hate.
This whole world that's supposed to be so great,
Is filled with nothing, nothing but hate.
Why do we keep all this inside,
Is that what takes away everyone's pride.
All hate is, is love gone sour,
What we need is love with some power.
That would be God,
The heavenly power.



Illustrator: Anna Gatlin

Pain

Grace McDanie
Honorable Mention Poetryl
Wesson High School

Pain is the feeling you gave to me.
To see me blind when you are free.

Pain is the feeling that I feel
To know now your love wasn't for real.

Pain is a feeling no one can touch
For once I loved you, and loved you much.

Pain is the reason why I am crying,
My happiness is slowly dying.

Pain is the result of your actions,
You can see it well in my actions.

Pain is the feeling you have shown me
I once was blind, but now I see.

To Whom I Like

Katie Davis
1st Place Poetry
College Poetry

Should I compare you to
My gray sweatshirt?
Which I put on because
It is cold and nothing else is clean?
Only to be thrust aside as
The day grows warm
And replaced by one of brighter hue?
I would rather liken you to
My favorite pair of Levis.
I wear these in summer and fall.
Springtime and winter. I have not
Discarded them for the latest fashion
Nor have I let myself outgrow them.
I will keep them because
Denim only gets better with age.
I am sure you will do the same.

Why I Don't Get Out of Bed

Brad Moulder
2nd place
College poetry

After the toil and tumult of the public day
Comes the sweet seclusion of when I can say
Goodbye to the world and its candid cast
So I can retire, relieved that time has passed.
Lying with lifeless posture and racing mind
On a cot of clouds, where no one can find
My focus, it's free, at last, the dreams
Of distant destinations, yet often it seems
To mimic this world where others are near
Yet even if foe, foreboding exists not here
For they are plain puppets, my will is their master
I speak for the friend, cop, parent, and pastor.
I play every role risking all without seize.
The prospects are plentiful, I do as I please.
Come see the magnificence manifested in my head
And you won't wonder why I don't get out of bed.

Illustrator: Josh Ford

Mumbling About the Muse

Aaron Board
3rd place
College poetry

We left the bed covered with crumbs of conversation.
Did we connect? or
just cuddle with curiosity?
(could she have switched identities again?)

We posed for the
obvious.
We showed the formal side while fumbling
at the mixed drinks of our e-motion.s.
Delirium drooled in together hours,

and if our parted
hands regret the neglect,
let them join
again with joy.

Perhaps, I twirl,
and you reel.
I fall, and
perhaps, you feel

the way I bounce back from my mistakes is a mirage of miracles,
but the mirrored images will ingest the indigenous genus and generalities.
we are common mentalities brushing for fingerprints on a broken reality.

,and it's in this way that the world begins to spin...

on this stage,
spin round
and round with me
in the grass
and twirl
to the worlds
which we have built while sitting.

It's fitting that
the lines we write
do not coincide.

,and on this stage,
I'm amazed at what a-muses me.
I'd hate to abuse our fusion.
The illusions of me would wither with the mo(u)rning
and sing only for the night,
but instead, I'll call you again and spin.

,and the worlds will not be faulty.
They will descend and
shift universes a little closer;
they will revolt against their revolutions
for the gravity of our chemistry.
They will hug and cling to each other,
and I will sing without the moon because I swoon for you.

I'm sick with these soliloquies;
the master of this tapestry needs the measure of a mate.
He debates with himself daily,
torn between and words
and his worlds,
mesmerized by metaphors
but bottled by the ambition to position
my-self closer to yours...
trapped on a stage
hoping that somehow
we've captured each other with a crumb-covered conveyance,
that we'd comote our emotions with these congruent commotions.

I will harvest the heritage within your heart
and harbor it from the insignificance of everyone else.
I will not contest our congress because I want my best to be with you,
holding your hands
and kissing your lips
with this unkarated concern.

,but can these characters care?

Can I reach out beyond this fortress of letters and
the silence of my syllables?
Can I dispell what took so long to build?

Yet, my nostrils are filled,
and I sense the residue is you.
The essence of your scent is the subject of these subjugated sentences;
the book lays unfinished without you.
You are the period at the bottom of every question mark.
You are the woman who has turned this man's pages.

(although days have been marked)
Have you caught this guard unaware in his tower,
scribbling gibberish about growing gravities,
grasping to hold on(e)t(w)o a concept greater than himself?

Even this evil emperor admits our minds have mixed,
but what about our worlds?
Do we have the exact elements for our development
to indulge and implement our implanted desires?

Tonight,
even words smiled
because we left
lips parted
instead of hands;
the seduction was held within security,
displayed through mutual gravities,
r-evolving into the future,
mesmerized by common moments
and e-motion.s.

Soul Searching

Elizabeth Davis
Wesson High School
1st Place General Essay

Essays are one of the things English teachers must thrive on. For one reason or another, every English teacher forces countless essays upon her students year after year. As a writer, I do not particularly mind having to write that much. My problem is with the prompts or subjects of the essay one is asked to write. Essays about "What I want to be when I grow up" do not require any soul searching. Essays of this caliber involve the same answers over and over again. Among the top three topics for "soul searching" essays: "My Life in 10 Years," "The Person I Admire Most," and "The Laws I've Learned in Life".

Every student is asked to write, at one point or another, a fictional essay that depicts how they view their life will be in ten years. While everyone should look forward and contemplate about their future, composing an essay about it will not help many. One cannot know the future, and one should really not worry about theirs if they are on the right track. "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life... Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" (*Student Bible*, NIV Matthew 6:25, 27). God has told us not to worry about our lives. Essays about whom we want to marry and how much money we would like to make do not help us to learn anything about ourselves.

Another top essay topic is about the student's role model. While this topic has some merit to it, few take it seriously. As a student with a busy social life, I tend to put off my English work until the last moment, much like every other student in my class. When one person decides their aunt is their role model, everyone else writes their essay on family. I love my family and see many members of it as people who have helped me but I have never written an essay that included the line "I want to be more like my best friend, Aunt Joyce." We all want to be better people. We all can find a family member to use as a good role model. But who actually uses that aunt or uncle as a role model in day-to-day life, instead of just an essay topic?

Finally, we find the wonderful "Laws of Life" essay. For those lucky souls that have never written such an essay, the student is asked to find a rule we as humans use in life. Most write about perseverance, forgiveness,

responsibility, and faith. All of these are wonderful virtues, but how many can say they apply them to their daily life? We find a virtue we have used once before and write a five-paragraph essay about how we live by it. Alas, many people forget their "law" as soon as the paper is turned in.

I am not criticizing my fellow writers that can actually write a meaningful paper with one of these topics. I am not against those that truly see their family as role models, or those that write essays about their future spouses. Essays are supposed to make one think, and for those that actually do cogitate over their essay topics, I applaud you. For the rest of the world's English students, I ask you to search your soul, to look back on your life. In the last days, "Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books" (Revelation 20:12). May we all periodically think back to the things we have done. One day our souls will be asked of us. Our English teachers will **not** have our essays ready.

***The New Student Bible*, New International Version,** Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1986

Foolish Feminists

Sarah Causey
Wesson High School
2nd Place General Essay

"{Feminists} often say that they are speaking for American women everywhere. Well, they don't speak for me. In fact, I would rather my dog had a voice. My dog would make a lot more sense" (*Antifeminism* 1). This quote expresses the attitudes most people have toward feminists, and with good reason. Feminists cause many problems for men and women alike, and they are usually "sexually unrestrained, selfish ...boorish ...uncouth" women (*Antifeminism* 1). Feminism claims to advocate the rights of women everywhere, but instead they deny men their God-given authority, murder innocent babies, and encourage violence. Feminism is not only unattractive and an embarrassment to women everywhere, but it is harmful to the marriage institution of marriage and to society.

Author Dorian Atherton wrote "Against women of high conservative caliber... {Feminists} are like smudged, scarred gutter pennies"(*Antifeminism* 1). Atherton compared Nancy Reagan type women to left wing Feminists and decided that the conservative women were "hot as a fireplace poker...because they possess everything that any sensible man would ever want," while the feminists were the gutter pennies that weren't worth picking up (*Antifeminism* 1). I agree completely. One of the most unattractive things a woman can possess is a hostile attitude, especially when that attitude is directed toward men. Who would desire a woman who "spewed ugliness" and "exercised gross selfishness" (*Antifeminism* 1)? Feminism is not attractive: it is repulsive.

Feminism is also an embarrassment to anti-feminist women. Someone once said, "No man is as anti-feminist as a really feminine woman." This is true, if for no other reason than because Feminism degrades the entire female gender. True women revel in their femininity and understand the differences between the sexes. Loud-mouthed, ignorant women who flaunt their foolishness defeat the purpose of advocating women's rights. Who wants to listen to some nagging, hostile, bitter woman complain about how miserable she is and how it's a man's fault that she's like that? Feminists need to wake up and realize that they are not only making themselves look like fools, but the female gender as a whole. As women, we should silence the hollers of these feminists and attempt to rebuild the dignity and beauty these women have taken from us. Feminism is a bad reflection on

each and every woman.

In addition to being unattractive and embarrassing, feminism is dangerous. It is harmful most of all to the nuclear family, particularly the marriage institution. One feminist said, "We must work to destroy {marriage}. The end of the institution of marriage is a necessary condition for the liberation of women" (*Feminist Quotes* 1). Another woman commented, "Freedom for women cannot be won without the abolition of marriage" (*Feminist Quotes* 1). These spiteful, foolish remarks exhibit the ignorance of these women. Little do they know, once marriage is abolished, so is all of society. Marriage is the cell in society's body; without it, the society does not function. Also, feminists are trying to convince women that sex is a violation. Sex within marriage is a God-given gift, and what a shame it is that these women cannot see that. They hold that "the institution of sexual intercourse is anti-feminist" (*Feminist Quotes* 1). This anti-sex attitude is affecting vulnerable married women and causing them to have problems with their husbands. This is exactly what the feminists wanted all along, for the women to "leave their husbands and not live individually with men" (Feminist Quotes 1).

Feminism is also harmful to society. "It destroys the relations of the sexes and all values and connecting abilities of society, nature and culture" (Gabnet 1). Feminists disregard the feelings and desires of others, especially men, and thus draw dividing lines between men and women. Not only do feminists promote competition and hostility between the sexes, but "they even advocate violence, including murder" (Gabnet 1). These women are not advocating women's rights, but encouraging violence and hatred. For example, the abortion movement was begun by feminists. Also, "a feminist calendar marked as a commemoration day the double murder by a farm woman of her husband and another man" (Gabnet 1). One feminist even said, "Sexism is not the fault of women—kill your fathers, not your mothers" (*Feminist Quotes* 1). This type of comment is evidence enough that feminism is dangerous to society.

A feminist group called SCUM (which stands for "society for cutting up men") once said, "It is now technically feasible to reproduce without the aid of males and to produce only females. We must begin immediately to do so" (Gabnet 1). Note how much these women resemble the Amazons in Greek mythology, and everyone should agree that the Amazons were not lovable creatures, but barbaric, foolish women. Feminists are similar. They are unhappy, hostile women who cause problems for everyone, including himself or herself. Feminism is harmful and undesirable, and probably very unsatisfying. One woman once said, "The woman who is to find true

gratification must love and accept her own womanhood as she loves and accepts her husband's manhood" (Middlebury 1). Too many feminists try to usurp men's masculinity and God-given abilities. That is probably why we have so many unhappy women in America.

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Looking for Love in all the Wrong Faces

Beci Teasley
Crystal Springs High School
3rd Place General Essay

Have you ever tried to define love? Is it really difficult to find love? Every definition that we come up with somehow falls short. What, then, is the elusive thing called that everyone will so desperately needs? Trying to define love is pretty confusing.

There are three kinds of love. The "if" kind of love is committed to a person as long as they meet your standards. The "because" kind of love is when you love someone because they are good-looking and popular. The "no matter what" love is when you love someone regardless of their looks.

I began looking through a magazine one day when I came across a story that really touched my heart. The story was about a fifteen-year-old girl named Kelly. Kelly was a sophomore in high school and really wanted to fit in, so she started going steady with this boy named Allen. Allen was not only a senior; he was a handsome, athletic, popular and funny. When Kelly was around him she forgot about everything. Her life revolved around him. Kelly started going to parties where Allen tempted her to drink. She quit going to church, and she often felt pressured by him when they were alone. Three months after graduation Allen went out of state to college. When he left he promised to write, e-mail, and call. Time went by and the only thing Kelly received was a letter telling her it was over. Kelly was devastated. She did not understand how someone she loved so much could do this to her. As I was reading this story it reminded me of a young insecure girl I once knew. I am that girl.

When I was thirteen I started seeing this really cute boy named Greg. My family and friends told me from the beginning he was nothing but a troublemaker. Being the stubborn person that I was I refused to listen. I thought he was so fine, and I just knew my friends would be impressed. It turns out all I did was embarrass myself.

He tempted me to do things I told myself I would never do: drugs, running away from home, lying to my parents, and most importantly not going to church. I was so caught up in the way the boy looked I could not see how badly this was hurting me. One night while I was waiting for him to call I received a phone call from a girl I did not know telling me that Greg wanted to break up. Like Kelly I thought it was the end of world but it was actually the best thing that could have ever happened to me. Kelly

and me experienced the "because of" love. We fell in love with these boys because we thought they were fine, popular, and cool. We did not care if they did bad things.

The Lord tells us "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart." By reading this verse I have learned that instead of trying to find a guy that looks good all the time I should really get to know him before I start to like him.

I asked five students from my school how important were looks when it came to dating a guy? Four out of five said that the first thing they look at in a person was how good they looked. I never thought too much about this, but now as I am writing this essay, I have noticed that I am the same way. Instead of always looking at someone outward appearance, I should really be examining who he or she is on the inside.

Love not based on looks are romance; real love is based on commitment and a deep understanding of someone. One day when I chose my husband I choose my husband I am going to choose a godly man with a good heart and spirit, not a ungodly man with good looks and a bad attitude. In conclusion, where does it say in the bible that Jesus was a good-looking person? With that question in mind, remember if you are ever tempted to think less of someone because of his or her looks, remember you could be thinking less of the Lord.

My Father's Love

Lauralyn Barnes
Magee High School
General Essay
Honorable Mention

J. Jelinek once said, "Love has the power to endure the fault that we can not cure."

Love lasts throughout the ages no matter what problems it may face. If someone loves us, he will love us despite all our wrongs. We may disappoint him many times but his love especially a father's love. Love conquers all things. In life, I have found that love, especially a father's love that perseveres.

When I was fourteen, my father saw the need for me to own my own transportation. He wanted me to have something to drive when I turned fifteen. At that time, we had an old Toyota pick-up. It was a nineteen-eighty-four model. He brought it the year I was born. It was a standard also. My daddy is very stubborn person though, so he set out to teach me to drive that truck. I did okay at first, and I seemed to be able to handle it. As my fifteenth birthday drew nearer, I began to dislike the idea of driving the "Toyota." I began to threaten my father. I told him that if he made me drive that truck, I would wreck it. Although I made this seemingly harmless threat, I never intended to go through with it.

On November 11, 1999, a peaceful Sunday in Magee, Mississippi my daddy decided that we should take a drive out to the farm and put up some deer stands. I, on the other hand, was particularly opposed to this idea. Daddy made me go anyway. We got into the little Toyota and set off. We drove out to the Air Port road. I was doing a usually good job of driving that Sunday. I thought I had finally gotten the hang of it. I did not know just how wrong I was. I started to turn onto another road and realized I was going too fast. Daddy started yelling and I was trying to concentrate. The turn was on the hill, as turned, I hit the gravel at the bottom of the hill. The wheels were caught and the truck shot across the road and through the trees. I could see the limbs from the limbs breaking as we flew past. All of a sudden, I saw a huge tree and about two seconds later, we smashed into the tree. I was screaming and crying. My head had hit the steering wheel; daddy screamed as his shoulder jerked out of socket. The impact caused it to dislocate. We got out of the truck and walked to the road. My daddy, who has great pain, squatted down and told me to call an ambulance. I

walked up the hill to a house. I beat on the door, but no one came to answer. Luckily, the door was unlocked. I went in and called the ambulance. Then I went back to check on my daddy. Sitting there on the side of the road for was the hardest fifteen minutes of my life. I watched my daddy the man who I admired for his strength; sit there in obvious pain, as I wiped blood and tears from my own eyes. A few people passed by on the road, and all we got from them were a wave. I had never felt so ignored and alone in all my life. They could clearly see me covered in blood, yet they choose to keep driving. Finally, the ambulance arrived; in addition had to call a second time. We were rushed to the emergency room where my mother and sister were waiting to meet us. They cleaned me up in a separate room, but across the hall, I could hear my daddy screaming as they pulled his shoulder back into place. He was strong though. I had never saw my daddy cry up until this day.

After all this was over, we went home. I avoided my father for a long time. In my opinion, I had ruined his life. He had extensive nerve damage and lost much use of his arm and hand. I felt abandoned, alone, and distant. I thought my family looked at me as a burden. Finally, around Christmas, we talked. He told me that he loved me no matter what happened, and that I would always be his little girl. He told me that God had a plan for each of us, and this was his plan for us. He told me he could never hate me. At that, moment I had never felt more loved by and from my father.

I now realize that a father's love for his children will preserve throughout all the trails of life. Just as God, our Heavenly father loves us no matter what our earthly father loves us just the same. He will always be there when we mess up. I have realized that a father's love is one thing that is definitely worth having.

Fall's Gift

Ivy McLeod
1st Place General Essay
Copiah Lincoln Community College

Summer has passed: the long, hot, humid days are replaced with the cool, clear, crisp autumn nights. Leaves are changing from bright green to spectacular shades of red, gold, and orange before falling from their branches to lay a brown carpet over the dying grass. Fall has arrived, and with its arrival, the usual effects of the season surface within me. Each year the autumn season brings forth the child within my soul; it increases my awareness of life and its passing fragility; and it reawakens within me a longing for home, wherever that may be.

The years may pass, but the childhood pleasure of long, leisurely walks through the woods remain to remind me that the child within, though changed by years of work and responsibility, can still enjoy the simplicity of nature in all of its autumn glory. Cool, crisp mornings beckon me outside, and the rustle of falling leaves calls me into the woods. Cracked twigs and the sound of crunching leaves mark each step I take as I set out on my morning adventure. I remember as a child I would look for Indians lurking behind every huge oak tree I could see; now I look for snakes hiding in the dry leaves and step carefully lest I accidentally stir up a rattlesnake or a copperhead. Eventually, my walk will lead me to an old tree stump where I can sit lazily for hours lost in daydreams. Sooner or later, a gently falling leaf will catch my attention, and I will watch its progress as it spirals downward only to be caught by the wind and lifted up again before gently landing on the ground beneath. Sometimes I can rake enough leaves together to lie upon while I continue my daydreams and marvel at the clouds above the emptying tree branches. Time cannot erase the pleasure of dry leaves tangled in my hair, the crunch of leaves beneath my feet, or the simple pleasure of idling away a cool, crisp, clear fall day lost in day-dreams and fantasies that I hope I never outgrow.

The falling leaves also remind me of passing time and the importance of living each day as if it were the last. It seems that just yesterday it was spring, time to break ground and plant new crops. New life was born, and everything was fresh, new, young, and beautiful. The tree's branches were loaded with fragile budding flowers and young leaves; perennials gingerly peeked their heads through the warming soil, and blue birds were nesting and bringing food to their newly hatched nestlings; spring means life. Fall,

however, means that this life is passing and the time for harvest has arrived. It is time to reap what one has sown; it may be food grown to store and use during the cold winter or a lifetime of good works. The days grow shorter and time flees quickly by, leaving little time to waste before winter sets in and catches one unprepared for the harsh cold reality of death. Time passes on, and our lives pass with it; we do not notice how quickly the days slip by until they are gone.

This brings me to the final effect of fall upon my life: a longing for home deep within me that has yet to be fulfilled. At the end of October, the time changes, and this makes the days shorter and the nights much longer. The result of this change is more time spent indoors. At this time of year, the comforts of home are lost in the emptiness within my heart. Home is a place that provides shelter and security from the outside world; it is a place of belonging. I do not know if it is a definite place or simply a state of being. Home is wherever an individual is free to simply be. Each year that passes hopefully brings me closer to the home I long for, and it will be filled with the warmth of a cozy fireplace, the smell of freshly baked cookies, and the comfort and security of a newborn baby wrapped lovingly in its mother's arms.

Cool, clear, crisp autumn nights have arrived. Year after year, this colorful season has the same effect upon me, and hopefully, the season of fall will always reveal the innocent child within me, the passing of time and how it should be spent, and that the home I long for is waiting for me in heaven.

My Love Affair with Vinyl

Katie Davis
2nd Place General Essay
Copiah-Lincoln Community College

I was born June 27, 1981. It was in that same week that my mother's favorite radio station went off the air. It played the classic rock that my parents loved. My family mourned the radio station, but the rest of America recovered much sooner. Two other beings were also born in the eighties: MTV and a strange device called a compact disk.

My parents have dozens of records. Lots of CDs too, I might add. They taught my brother, sister and I to have a love for the older music. I never equated their music with mine until one special day. That day began my love affair with vinyl.

Jon, Beth and I wanted to do a song for a school talent show. We had picked Poison's "Your Mama Don't Dance," to perform. My brother Jon was to be Brett Michaels, I was CC Deville, my sister Beth was Ricki Rockett, and a friend was Bobby Dall. Everyone was practicing in my brother's room.

"Kids," my mom called down the hall. "Can you turn the music down a little bit? We are trying to listen to music in the living room."

My brother answered that we were trying to learn our song.

"Which song is it?" she asked.

"It's 'Your Mama Don't Dance' by Poison. It's really cool; you'd like it," I answered.

"Oh I think I already do. Come in here for a little while."

So the four of us tromped into the living room, irate about interrupting practice. My mother stopped the music she was listening to and put in something else.

I couldn't believe my ears. It had the same percussion intro, the same bass part, and the same lyrics! "It's it's it's…" I stammered.

"It's Loggins and Messina doing 'Your Mama Don't Dance'. They wrote it."

I was dumbfounded. Here was my parents' music, but it was mine too. This wasn't just another band that had recorded the song; they had written it! I wondered what other modern songs had been written by older bands. As the years went by I learned that Micheal Jackson didn't write "Come Together", but that John Lennon and Paul McCartney did. I discovered the Tin Pan Alley writers; everyone equipped with a cheap piano

and expected to write hit songs one after the other.

Slowly something started happening. I stopped wanting to listen to the current music. As the eighties were finishing I was head over heels in love with Gene Autry, Marty Robbins and Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys. Kids my age were supposed to like Hank Williams Jr. not Hank Williams Sr. In my later teenage years I developed a passion for the protest songs of the sixties that has made my mom proud.

Now I have my own record player. It also came with dual tape deck, programmable radio, and a five-disk CD changer. But I love my records. My music taste is as varied as my parents' now, from Gene Autry to ZZ Top, and everything in between. I am continuing my love affair with vinyl.

Illustrator: William Thornhill

The Rape of the Reader's Nerves

Delaney Smith
1st Place Literary Essay
Wesson High School

"Belinda now, whom thirst of fame invites, burns to encounter two adventurous knights: (*The Rape of the Lock*, Alexander Pope, 25-26). And so the game begins. During the course of this melodramatic card game and all throughout *The Rape of the Lock*, Belinda's true personality is revealed. Even though she is the "good guy" of the poem, she presents herself in a negative way. According to her attitudes and actions, Belinda is proud, bossy, and loud.

Even before the card game is started, Belinda's arrogance was already shining through. As she approached the two lords to engage in the game, she "swells her breast with conquests yet to come" (28). Belinda was sure in her mind that she would claim the victory. Also, the spectacle Belinda put on after her hair was severed showed how proud she was of her appearance. A modest and practical woman would comprehend that the lock would soon be restored to its previous condition, but Belinda was too stuck on herself to realize this. Belinda's proud attitude and pompous actions put a dent in her image, and only began to describe her complete personality.

Bossiness is an understatement for Belinda. If there was a decision to be made, Belinda would surely pipe up and give her opinion. For example, as she and the two lords dealt out the cards, Belinda pronounces, "Let the spades be trumps! and they were" (46). Also, she felt she could order people around if necessary. "Restore the lock! Restore the lock!" she shouted at the baron after he took her precious hair. Belinda's bossiness shines through her self-important actions and haughty attitude throughout the mock epic.

Finally, Belinda must be half deaf because there is no excuse for her high volumes. For example, after her king of hearts takes the baron's ace of hearts, Belinda's "exulting fills with shouts the sky; the walls, the woods, the long canals reply" (99-101). In other words, anyone in a fifty-mile radius could hear her celebration cries. However, Belinda seemed to top herself when she realized her lock of hair was gone. "Screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies. Not louder shrieks pitying heaven are cast, when husbands, or when lap dogs breath their last" (156-158). These piercing shouts were shriller than an anguished woman grieving over her departed husband.

Furthermore, Belinda goes on to screech earsplitting lamentations at the baron, and "the vaulted roofs rebound," echoing her strident words throughout the halls. Her loudness only added to the negative image Belinda portrayed in *The Rape of the Lock*.

Although she was the main focus of the mock epic, Belinda adopts a "spoiled brat" attitude. When she wasn't bossing her peers around, she was bellowing at the top of her lungs. On top of that, Belinda was overflowing with pride. The baron should've done the readers a favor and raped her obnoxious attitude while her was at it.

Bassell, William C. et al. *Adventures in English Literature*, Pegasus Edition, Orlando: Harcoure Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1989.

Robert Gooch
2nd Place Literary Essay
Wesson High School

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was in love with nature. This inspired him to write *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. The Mariner was an old man while telling this story. He had a gray beard and a glittering eye. The Mariner was cursed to live a life in death which means he was to always live in misery. The Mariner was to go around and tell his story of how he shot the Albatross. At first the Mariner had no feelings or love for nature. As the Mariner faces a life of misery for shooting the Albatross, he begins to realize how great nature really is.

The first account of the Mariner's lack of feelings and alienation from nature in this poem was when, of course, the Mariner shot the Albatross. "Why look'st thou so?"-"With my crossbow I shot the Albatross!" (Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* 81-82) He had no sense of what the Albatross was or what it stood for. He has no concept in what nature really is or stands for. The second account of the Mariner's lack of feelings was when he starts talking about the slimy things in the sea. "Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs upon the slimy sea" (125-126). He has no feelings for nature again. Coleridge recounts this stanza, but the Mariner has a different point of view, "The many men so beautiful! And they all dead did lie: And a thousand slimy things Lived on; and so did I" (236-239). The mariner despises the creatures because they are still alive and he is still alive, but his men are not. The next stanza says, "I looked upon the rotting sea" (240). He looks upon the sea and thinks that it is nothing compared to his men. These few accounts show you how Coleridge proves that men of our world have no feelings or emotions for nature, but feelings for their own selves.

The Mariner reconciles with nature when he faces life in death, or in other words faces a life in misery. After he shoots the Albatross, all of his crewmen die, and he is the only one left. So his punishment was worse than death: he was to live a life of misery. So when he realizes what he has done, he learns to respect nature. His first account of respectfulness was when he mentions how he beholdeth God's creatures, "Beyond the shadow of the ship, I watched the water snakes: They moved in tracks of shining white; And when they reared, the elfish light Fell off in hoary flakes."(272-

276) The Mariner used words of enthusiasm such as "shining white." He is beginning to realize the true meaning of nature. In the next stanza, he really uses words of appreciation, "Oh happy living things! No tongue Their beauty might declare: A spring of love gushed from my heart." The Mariner is using words such as beauty and love. (282-284) He is reconciling with natural world. The stanza goes on, and the Mariner begins to bless the creatures. "And I blessed them unaware" (287). When the Mariner shot the Albatross, the crewmen tied the Albatross around his neck as a spell. Now, as he begins to bless the creatures of God, the spell begins to break, and the Albatross falls off. He starts getting water and begins to drink. The Mariner's appreciation for nature begins to give him back water and a way home, but he still lives with the curse of telling his story of shooting the Albatross and the reconciliation of the natural world to everyone.

So in conclusion Coleridge's moral or theme of the story is stated in the end of the poem. "Farewell, farewell; but this I tell To thee, thou Wedding Guest! He prayeth well, who loveth well both man and bird and beast. He prayeth best, who loveth best All things both great and small; For the dear God who loveth us, He made and loveth all" (610-617). The words of appreciation and the reconciling with the natural world prove that Coleridge's theme is that we shall love both man and nature equally. As stated in the facts of reconciling with natural world, Coleridge proves not only his own love for nature but how we should love nature and that is equally as men because God created not only men but creatures of nature too.

Male Versus Female

Lauren Raney
3rd Place Literary Essay
Wesson High School

The Rape of the Lock by Alexander Pope and "Plan and Purpose" by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele have some of the same satires throughout their works. All three writers are trying to convey a message to their readers, but they are being both discrete and straightforward at times. The satire of males versus females is used through out both works.

Pope uses a card game to demonstrate his satire of male versus female. At this age period, it was not lady-like to play cards— let alone win. As Belinda wins, life changes for her. "Sudden, these honors shall be snatched away, and cursed forever this victorious day" (*The Rape of the Lock*, Alexander Pope: 405). The baron begins to plot on Belinda so he can restore his pride and dignity. With the help of another woman, the baron steals a lock of Belinda's hair. "He takes the gift with reverence, and extends the little engine o his fingers' end" (Pope: 405). So Belinda becomes enraged with anger and fights the baron with her words. The male versus female satire is expressed through out the whole poem.

Addison and Steele also use the male versus female satire through out their writing. They indicate that the male race is at a higher level than a woman is. " But there are none to whom this paper will be more useful than to the female world" ("Plan and Purpose," Joseph Addison and Richard Steele: 398). They purpose that women should stay at home and work, while the man goes out of the house and work. Those men that do not work out of the home are considered to be lazy and act like a woman. "Their amusements seem rather as they are women than as they are reasonable creatures" (Addison and Steele: 398). These two writers are saying that if men do not go out of the home and work, they are lazy and have a female side to them. The male versus female is demonstrated through out their work, but in different ways.

Pope, Addison, and Steele demonstrate a lot of the same male versus female satire through their works. Their message was displayed in a variety of ways, so nobody could say that it was not there. Addison and Steele used more than just the male versus female satire in their writings, which helped to tie everything together. "In the meanwhile I hope these my gentle readers, who have so much time on their hands, will not grudge throwing away a quarter of an hour in a day on this paper, since they may

do it without any hindrance to business" (Addison and Steele: 398).

While these three satirists are the same in a variety of their writings, one can be favored more by one sex than the other. Most females would be fond of Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* because the male did not get away with cutting Belinda's hair. "All that I dread is leaving you behind! Rather than so, ah, let me still survive, and burn in Cupid's flames-but burn alive" (Pope: 408). With that he burned for his punishment. Being called a woman, in "Plan and Purpose," was punishment for some men.

Bassell, William C. et al. *Adventures in English Literature, Pegasus Edition.* Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1989.